

Ground (Dzogchen)

This is an **old revision** of this page, as edited by **B9 hummingbird hovering** ([talk](#) | [contribs](#)) at 07:17, 2 May 2010 (*[Günther](#) (1984) provides a definition and discussion of facticity in relation to the Dzogchen Ground.*). The present address (URL) is a **permanent link** to this revision, which may differ significantly from the **current revision** [↗](#).

([diff](#)) ← [Previous revision](#) | [Latest revision](#) ([diff](#)) | [Newer revision](#) → ([diff](#))

'Ground [of Being]' (IAST:

āśraya; Tibetan: གཞི, Wylie:

gzhi^[1]; Chinese: 依止^[2]; Pinyin:

yīzhǐ^[3]; Wade–Giles: i-chih^[4];
Korean 의지^[5]; Korean
transcription: ŭiji^[6]; Japanese:
エジ;^[7] Japanese transcription:
eji^[8]) (The Tibetan is
pronounced: zhi) is an essential
cultural token of the Dzogchen
tradition of both the Bonpo^[9]
and the Nyingmapa.^[10] It is a
seminal conceptual point and
focus of praxis foregrounded in
the Dzogchen literature and
sadhana (Sanskrit) lineages

and may be appraised as a
memetic conduit for the
continuum[-of-being] to enter
into the concept-less Dzogchen
nondual 'awareness', 'rigpa'
(Wylie: rig pa; IAST: vidyā)^[11],
Dzogchen-*as-process* where the
praxis albeit 'natural' (Wylie:
lhan skyes; IAST: sahaja)^[12]
and 'effortless' (Wylie: lhun
grub; IAST: anābhoga)^[13] has
the sense of 'spontaneity'.^{[14][15]}

Ground as triune

The Gankyil is the polysemic teaching tool employed in the Dzogchen tradition to iconographically signify the triune of the Ground, a symbol of primordial nonduality.

Throughout the Seventeen Tantras, the principal tantras of the Nyingma Dzogchen doctrinal view on the Sugatagarbha qua 'Ground'

(Wylie: *gzhi*), the triune of
'essence' (Wylie: *ngo bo*),
'nature' (Wylie: *rang bzhin*) and
'power' (Wylie: *thugs rje*) is
foregrounded. Where **essence**
is openness or emptiness
(Wylie: *ngo bo stong pa*), **nature**
is luminosity, lucidity or clarity
(as in the luminous mind of the
Five Pure Lights) (Wylie: *rang
bzhin gsal ba*) and **power** is
universal compassionate
energy (Wylie: *thugs rje kun*

khyab), unobstructed (Wylie: *ma*
'gags pa).^[16]

Goodman & Davidson (1992:
p.14) render the triune of the
Ground as 'facticity' (Wylie: *ngo*
bo), 'actuality' (Wylie: *rang*
bzhin) and 'resonance' (Wylie:
thugs rje) and in so doing place
this esoteric cultural token of
Dzogchen-as-praxis within the
wider technical language of

contemporary philosophical
discourse in the English:

*"Process-oriented
rdzogs-chen has as its
pivot the notion of gzhi
which means both
ground (the static, sort
of steady-state) and
reason (the dynamic,
the intensity with which
the unfolding of the*

initial pure potential occurs). As such pure potential (gzhi ka-dag chen-po) it is discussed in terms of a triune dynamics, referred to as facticity (ngo-bo), actuality (rang-bzhin), and resonance (thugs-rje). This English rendering of highly technical terms

*constantly employed in
the original Tibetan
sources has been
chosen in order to avoid
any essentialist
associations, so much
more so as the texts
themselves repeatedly
state that ngo-bo
(facticity) has nothing
to do with nor can even
be reduced to the*

*(essentialist) categories
of substance and
quality; that rang-bzhin
(actuality) remains
open-dimensional,
rather than being or
turning into a rigid
essence despite its being
what it is; and that
thugs-rje (resonance) is
an atemporal sensitivity
and response, rather*

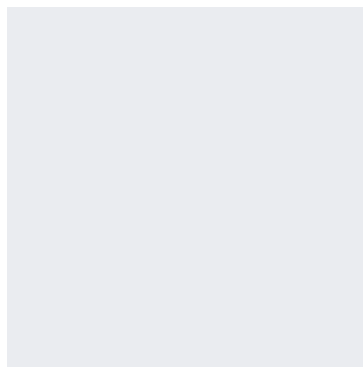
*than a distinct and
narrowly circumscribed
operation."*^[17]

In their annotations to this paragraph, Goodman & Davidson (1992: p.147) identify that they draw the sense of 'resonance' from the work of Jantsch (1975)^[18] and further define thus:

*"...it is resonance
(thugs-rje) with its
fluctuations as high-
level excitation (rig-pa)
and low-level excitation
(ma-rig-pa)--in cognitive
terms: understanding
(rtogs) and lack of
understanding (ma-
rtogs)--that
stochastically*

*determines the final
outcome of the
process."*[19]

Günther (1984) provides a
definition and discussion of
facticity in relation to the
Dzogchen Ground.[20]



Gankyil

Nomenclature of article: meta-annotation

Caveat lector: The nomenclature for the title of this Wikipedia article "Ground of Being" was informed by the theological discourse of 'Ground of Being' of both theistic and nontheistic systems of which this Dzogchen cultural token partakes. Saliently, "Ground of

Being" is how the Tibetan term gzhi (Wylie) has been given an English gloss by Lipman (c.1984) and Barron (1998) in his rendering of the Nelug Dzö of Longchenpa (1308 – 1364 or possibly 1369) follows Lipman's lead.^[21] That said, it is important that Ground of Being does not become naturalized for gzhi (Wylie) and instituted as the ascendant rendering in English, this choice was chosen

to honor the article title naming conventions policy of Wikipedia which prefers English where possible.

Nomenclature, orthography and etymology

The Tibetan: གཞི, Wylie: *gzhi*

has been rendered as 'Base', 'Basis', 'Ground' and 'Ground of Being' amongst other English glosses. Base is a contraction

of 'Basis of All' (Tibetan: ཀུན
གཞི, Wylie: *kun gzhi*).

Ashraya

Importantly, the authoritative
source for the Nyingma

Dzogchen school in English,

Dudjom et. al. (1991: p.535

Index of Technical Terms) gives

the Sanskrit for the 'Ground' as

'āśraya' (IAST; Sanskrit

Devanagari: आश्रय; "ashraya")^[22]

and this is identified as a direct analogue of the Wylie, attested and not a conjectural attribution.

Semantic field

The semantic field of "ashraya" (आश्रय; Etymology: आ- √श्रि.) like most terms in the ancient language of Sanskrit has a considerable play in denotation, as charted in the following list:^[23]

- that to which anything is annexed or with which anything is closely connected or on which anything depends or rests
- a recipient , the person or thing in which any quality or article is inherent or retained or received
- seat, resting-place
- dwelling, asylum, place of refuge, shelter, depending on,

having recourse to

- help, assistance, protection
- authority, sanction, warrant
- a plea, excuse (Legal)
- the being inclined or addicted to, following, practising
- attaching to , choosing , taking
- joining , union , attachment
- dependance , contiguity , vicinity
- relation

- connection
- appropriate act or one consistent with the character of the agent
- (in Gr.) the subject , that to which the predicate is annexed
- (with Buddhists) the five organs of sense with मनस् or mind (the six together being the recipients of the आश्रित or objects which enter them by

way of their आलम्बन or qualities)

- source , origin
- आ-श्रय depending on , resting on , endowed or furnished with (e.g. अष्ट-गुणा*श्रय » under अष्ट).^[24]

Detail

Yogacara, Chan and Nyingma Dzogchen

Vasubandhu (, fl. 4th c.) and his half-brother Asanga (c. 300–370 CE) are important foundations for Nyingma Dzogchen terminology, especially the Ground. The doctrine of the 'Ground' (Wylie: gzhi; IAST:) and its essence of 'primordial purity' (Wylie: ka

dag) of Dzogchen draws upon and redefines technical terminology of the Yogācāra, particularly Yogacharins who held to the doctrine of the 'originally pure mind' (IAST: *viśuddhi cittaprakṛiti*) and the literature and important commentaries of the Mahāyāna-śraddhotpādaśāstra (IAST unattested and reconstructed; 'The Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith').^[25] The

view of the mind in the
'Awakening of Mahayana Faith'
(Chinese: Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin
lun) had a significant import on
the doctrinal development of
the East Mountain Teaching
(also known as the Northern
School of Chan).^[26] According
to A. W. Barber of the University
of Calgary^[27], Chan Buddhism
was introduced to the
Nyingmapa in three principal
streams: the teachings of

Master Kim, Kim Ho-shang,
(Chin ho shang) 金和尚
transmitted by *Sang Shi*^[28] in
ca. 750 CE; the lineage of
Master Wu Chu (無住禪師) of
the Pao T'ang School was
transmitted within Tibet by Ye-
shes Wangpo; and the teaching
from Mo Ho Yen, 和尚摩訶衍
(Tibetan: *Hwa shang Mahayana*)
that were a synthesis of the
Northern School of Chan and
the Pao T'ang School.^[29]

Aśvaghōṣa (?80-?150 CE) is attributed with writing the no longer extant or never existent Sanskrit of the Mahāyāna-śraddhotpādaśāstra:

Asvaghosa explained the two aspects of One Mind in terms of the Three Greatnesses: t'i(體), hsiang(相) and yung(用), or the essence, attributes and functions

of One Mind.

The Absolute aspect of One Mind is referred to as t'i(體), "essence", while the phenomenal aspect is called hsiang(相), "attributes", and yung(用), "function". To substantialize One Mind, or to think that something is supposed to come from it, is to be

*ignorant of the
Greatness of Mahayana.
The Greatness of
Mahayana is talked
about in terms of the
philosophy of
emptiness. If we cling to
self-identity, we will be
forced to confront no-
self. But if we throw
away the erroneous
belief in self-identity,*

*everything in this world
becomes One and we
cannot help but believe
in the Greatness of
Mahayana. It is quite
paradoxical.* [30]

Wonhyo's (617 - 686 CE)
commentary on the *Awakening
of Mahayana Faith* identifies
'Three Greatness' (三大) which
are 'Essence' (體), 'Function' (用)
and 'Attributes' (相) and these

are triune of the Ground of the
'One Mind' (Sanskrit:
Ekacitta^[31]; Chinese: yi hsin; i-
hsin; Japanese: isshin) in the
Chinese tradition.^[32] Some
Western scholars have
asserted some Bonpo and
Nyingma terma and tantric
literature to be unattributed
Tibetan translations of Chinese
masters such as Wonhyo. The
timeline and congruence of the
terminology and that many

works of Wonhyo are no longer extant, requires further scholarship and investigation. The work of Wonch'uk (613–696), a contemporary of Wŏnhyo was translated into Tibetan and greatly respected in the Himalaya, especially by Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), which demonstrates that the transmission channels were open but is most possibly after the arising of the Seventeen

Tantras which codify the triune of the Ground extensively.

Unfortunately, the thesis of Alson was tendered in Korean.

Vasubandhu (fl. 4th century)

was the Abhidharma lense through which key exegetes of the Dzogchen tradition and the greater Himalayan

Buddhadharma tradition built aspects of their lexicon. As an aside, It is yet to be definitively determined whether there was

a parallel developed tradition
invested in the historical
evocation of the Bonpo
Dzogchenpa. The Dzogchen
lineages of the Bonpo,
Nyingmapa and Kagyupa
currently and historically,
entwined in 'practice' (Sanskrit:
sadhana). Moreover,
Śāntarakṣita (fl. 8th century)
the first 'abbot' (Tibetan:
khenpo) of Samye, was
classified by Tibetan scholars

as Yogācāra-Svātantri-
kā Mādhyamika and it is this fare
of Yogācāra, Svātantri and
Mādhyamika and the liturgy
and esoteric rites and 'twilight
language' (Sanskrit: sandha-
bhasa) of the Ganachakra and
the charnel ground which for
the most part seasoned with
indigenous flourish and
innovation by the poetry and
'poetic mead' (IAST: amṛta) of
the Mahasiddha 'songs of

realization' (Sanskrit: dohā),
yields Nyingma Dzogchen
terminology.

Mindstream

Namkha'i & Shane (1999:
p.195) clarify the relationship of
the '[mind]stream' (Wylie:
[thugs] rgyud) with the 'Base'
(gzhi) and 'Nature' (Wylie: rang
bzhin; IAST: svabhāva) thus:

"The Tibetan term 'gyü' (rgyud) means 'woolen thread', and the image of the thread is intended to represent 'continuity' --the continual alternation of voidness and manifestation that is the Nature [rang bzhin] of our Base [gzhi].... The Sanskrit

term of which the Tibetan word 'gyü' is a translation is, and literally means 'the intricate pattern of a woven fabric'. But the way the term is understood has become intimately connected with that of another Sanskrit term, prabandha, whose

*literal meaning is
'continuity'."*[33]

Svabhava (Sanskrit; Wylie: rang
bzhin) is very important in the
nontheistic theology of the
Bonpo Dzogchen 'Great
Perfection' tradition where it is
part of a technical language to
render macrocosm and
microcosm into nonduality, as
Rossi (1999: p.58) states:

"The View of the Great Perfection further acknowledges the ontological identity of the macrocosmic and microcosmic realities through the threefold axiom of Condition (ngang), Ultimate Nature (rang bzhin) and Identity (bdag nyid).

*The Condition (ngang)
is the Basis of all (kun
gzhi)--primordially pure
(ka dag) and not
generated by primary
and instrumental
causes. It is the origin
of all phenomena. The
Ultimate Nature (rang
bzhin) is said to be
unaltered (ma bcos pa),
because the Basis is*

*spontaneously
accomplished (lhun
grub) in terms of its
innate potential (rtsal)
for manifestation (rol
pa). The non-duality
between the Ultimate
Nature (i.e., the
unaltered appearance
of all phenomena) and
the Condition (i.e., the
Basis of all) is called the*

*Identity (bdag nyid).
This unicum of
primordial purity (ka
dag) and spontaneous
accomplishment (lhun
grub) is the Way of
Being (gnas lugs) of the
Pure-and-Perfect-Mind
[byang chub (kyi)
sems]. "[34]*

Mala analogy of Ground of Being

File:Japamala2.jpg

Japa-mala made from Sacred Basil (Tulsi)

Namkha'i & Shane (1999: p.195) employ the traditional analogy and teaching tool of the 'rosary' (Sanskrit: mala) to describe the relationship of the aspects of the Base:

"The image of a woollen thread, as in the term

'gyü', is used in relation to the Base to point out the way in which our experiences are strung in the continuity of the Base like beads strung along the thread of a rosary or mala. Just as between the beads of a rosary there are empty spaces in which there is only thread, so too,

*between each of our
thoughts and our
experiences, there are
spaces; but, even
though there is an
empty space between
them, and even though
they are void--or empty--
- in themselves,
thoughts and
experiences*

nevertheless continue to manifest.


If we were to explain this example in terms of the three aspects of the Base (Essence, Nature, and Energy) as they are understood in the Dzogchen teachings we would say that the thread represents the

*Nature [rang bzhin]--
which is the unbroken
continuity of
manifestation of the
Essence [ngo bo] (or
voidness), while the
beads represent the
Energy [thugs rje].*

*Inside every bead (every
thought or experience)
in the example there is*

only thread (the continuity of emptiness' potentiality to manifest); and in our lives, even though each and every thought or experience is essentially empty, thoughts and experiences never stop arising."^[35]

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